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Eastern District of California

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FORMER NUCLEAR ENGINEER SENTENCED TO MORE THAN FOUR YEARS FOR THREATS AND ANTHRAX HOAXES

SACRAMENTO, Calif.—United States Attorney McGregor W. Scott announced today that MICHAEL LEE BRAUN, 53, of Elk Grove, was sentenced today by United States District Court Judge Edward J. Garcia to 51 months in prison, ordered to pay a \$10,000 fine, \$43,715.39 mandatory reimbursement to state and local entities for HAZMAT decontamination and response costs, and a \$400 special assessment. Defendant was also sentenced to 36 months of supervised release following incarceration. The judge remanded BRAUN into custody immediately following sentencing.

This case was the product of an extensive investigation coordinated by the Joint Terrorism Task Force, comprised of federal, state, and local law enforcement, including the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the United States Secret Service, United States Postal Inspection Service, and Sacramento Metro Fire.

According to Assistant United States Attorney Ellen V. Endrizzi, who is prosecuting the case, BRAUN was originally indicted on one count of threatening the President of the United States, one count of sending threatening communications to an individual, and eight counts of providing false information and perpetrating hoaxes. Each of the letters BRAUN sent contained threats and a white powder that he claimed was “poison” and a “death powder.” Laboratory analysis indicated that the powder was common baking soda. BRAUN pleaded guilty to four

counts on April 11, 2008, and the remaining charges were dismissed today at sentencing.

Over the course of four and a half years, BRAUN mailed approximately 58 threatening letters, with a majority containing the white powder. His targets included federal, state and local government officials, local news and radio reporters, a California Superior Court, hotels, and other commercial entities. In sentencing the defendant, Judge Garcia said that “the defendant has credibility problems,” and BRAUN’s request for a lenient sentence based on depression and allegations of alcohol abuse was denied. BRAUN acknowledged his need for punishment and apologized to his victims, but continued to foist some responsibility onto others. Judge Garcia made plain that BRAUN must accept responsibility for his actions, when he said, “It’s not ‘they’. It’s YOU.”

United States Attorney McGregor W. Scott commented, “Threats and white powder letters instill fear in the community and waste valuable emergency response resources. These cases are taken seriously and will be prosecuted. The prison sentence, fine, and reimbursement costs should make plain to the public that anthrax hoaxes are no joke.”

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